1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

gave much time and effort to forward the program. Dr. Alfonso Caso discussed many problems and gave valuable advice. Numerous members of the staff of the Instituto Politécnico Nacional also gave of their time. President Robert G. Sproul of the University of California, arranged a special leave of absence to make the study possible. Above all, thanks are due to Dr. D. F. Rubín de la Borbolla, then head of the Department of Anthropology of the Instituto Politécnico Nacional and now director of the Escuela Nacional de Antropología, collaborator in the general program, who gave many days of his time in completing necessary arrangements to make the study possible.

In addition to the persons mentioned, I wish also to express my gratitude to those who have helped further the general Program of Anthropological Investigations among the Tarascans: General Lázaro Cárdenas, former President of the United States of Mexico; Dr. A. L. Kroeber, of the University of California, Berkeley,

[continued on top of p. 4b]

THE SETTING AND THE PEOPLE

The modern Tarascans occupy the west central section of northern Michoacán, Mexico. In prehistoric times the Tarascan area was larger, including most of the State of Michoacán, except possibly the rather abrupt and not very hospitable seacoast, as well as parts of the State of Jalisco to the northwest, Guanajuato to the northeast, and the lower end of the Balsas River basin in Guerrero to the south. This expanded area apparently represented the results of a series of conquests. Two or three centuries before the arrival of the Spaniards, the Tarascan area probably was not greatly different from that of today.

The State of Michoacán is one of the most densely populated rural States of Mexico. It lies to the west of Mexico City, and its capital, Morelia, is about 250 miles from the National Capital by road or railroad. Despite its dense population, much of the State is rugged and mountainous. Its eastern and northern parts are on the plateau of México. Level areas are often above 7,000 feet elevation, but, although it is technically a part of the Central Mexican plateau, only the northern margins of the State

[continued in middle of p. 4b]

1;Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34

133 Coalcomán, which again reaches elevations of over 10,000 feet. The rain shadow of this
[132] range accounts for the subarid conditions of part of the basin area. Although these mountains are little known, apparently they rise fairly steeply on both faces and the coastal area beyond is narrow and of little use.

The drainage of Michoacán presents some peculiarities. In the north and west central region are lakes of various size, of which perhaps the best known is Lake Pátzcuaro. In common with some other lakes in the area, Lake Pátzucuaro has no outlet, but its waters are nevertheless not brackish. The high porosity of the volcanic soil may account for this phenomenon, for the lake has evidently been isolated from other drainages for a long period of time. This isolation is attested by the fact
[136] that the native fish are all very primitive viviparous species.

[132] Moreover, despite heavy rainfall in some areas (at Lake Pátzcuaro the average annual rainfall is around 60 inches), there are virtually no permanent streams and even springs are rare. Most Tarascan towns suffer from
[312] almost constant water shortage despite the heavy precipitation. In contrast, some of the lower lands have abundant large running streams. In places, underground springs of great size emerge at elevations of about 5,500 feet. Near Uruapan, for example, a large stream is formed by a group of such springs.

131 The present-day range of the Tarascans cannot be defined with great accuracy, partly be-
101 cause of the lack of detailed studies and partly because of the degree of acculturation undergone by many settlements. Villages which outwardly differ in no visible respect from well-known Tarascan settlements often contain no persons speaking Tarascan. All around the edges of Tarascan territory occur villages in various degrees of assimilation to Mexican culture and with various degrees of physical mixture with the Mestizo population. As a result, the present-day distribution of the Tarascans can only be approximated (map 1).

On the east, the basin of Lake Pátzcuaro is definitely Tarascan, although some towns, such as Tzintzuntzan, the traditional capital of the Tarascan "Empire," are no longer Tarascan-speaking. The western edge of Tarascan ter-

131 ritory is close to the railroad which runs
101 through the town of Zamora to Los Reyes. The southern boundary might be defined roughly as on a line from Los Reyes to Uruapan and thence close to the railway from Uruapan to Pátzcuaro, while the new highway from Mexico City to Guadalajara in some places runs just inside the northern limits and in others, just outside. Within or near the borders of the present-day Tarascan area occur a number of old Mexican towns closely associated with the historic Tarascans and their contemporary culture, which provide the administrative centers and the major market places. These towns are
[361] Pátzcuaro, Zacapu, Purépero, Zamora, Los Reyes, and Uruapan. In some instances other
[563] towns of local importance have arisen more recently, towns which were once Tarascan but are now occupied by Mestizos and deculturated Tarascans. A good example of such a town is Chilchota.

13 Viewed as a whole, the Tarascan area may be characterized generally as an elevated temperate region of sufficient rainfall, deep volcanic soils, and pine or mixed pine and hardwood forests. In detail there are differences, and a number of regions may be identified.

The easternmost region is that about Lake
[361] Pátzcuaro. The lake has an elevation of slightly over 7,000 feet, and most of the villages are either on the shore or upon islands in the lake. The forests have been cleared away
[311] around the lake except upon lands too steep to cultivate with the plow. Rainfall is heavy, but is concentrated in the summer months. The climate is temperate and cool even in midsummer.

North of Lake Pátzcuaro is a large fertile valley or depression near Zacapu, ringed about by hills and mountains covered with forest. Although there is but little difference in elevation from Lake Pátzcuaro, the climate is warmer and some tropical or subtropical plants such as sugarcane are grown on a small scale.

Over a range of mountains to the west of Zacapu is a fertile valley known as La Cañada. Here the climate is warmer and more arid, as
[312] is evidenced by the frequency of irrigation and
[241] extensive cultivation of citrus fruit, bananas, and similar tropical and subtropical plants.

[text continues on p. 57a]

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1: Beals E-5 (1940-1941) 1946
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[p.6]

MAP 1.—Tarascan territory. Towns in italic are Tarascan in culture and speech. Towns in roman are either of Mestizo origin or are primarily Mestizo in population and culture and Spanish in speech. The list of Tarascan towns shown is complete only in the vicinity of Cherán; the inadequacies of existing maps make it impossible to show all the Tarascan towns with any approach to accuracy.

2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
[P. 7a] NU34 Tarasco NU34
Pátzcuaro
[P. 6 contains no Text]

I

INTRODUCTION

131 The Tarascans are one of the principal Indian groups on the central plateau of Mexico, numbering around 55,000 in 1940. [161] They occupy the central region of the State of Michoacan, mainly in the Lake Pátzcuaro area and the Sierra west of it. 621 They live in sixty-six villages *(pueblos)*[1] and a number of dependent hamlets [101] *(ranchos)* amidst similar settlements of mestizo Spanish-speaking people.[2]

171 Except for language, the differences between the Tarascans and the nearby rural 178 mestizos are not very great from either the cultural or any other point of view. Four centuries of living together with and under people of European culture (Spanish colonial or modern Mexican) have made the Tarascans considerably interdependent with Mexican national life, and their culture, if analyzed in traits and institutions, might show more of a Spanish than an Indian heritage. The loss of Tarascan speech and consciousness is only one more step in the process of greater integration and acculturation into the Mexican nation, and many of the mestizo villages near the Tarascans have undergone this transformation only recently.

This interrelation with the rest of the nation is seen not only in the content of their culture but also in their participation in the social and political conflicts of Mexico.

668 National issues which have agitated Mexico in later years have their local manifestation in Tarascan towns. Conflicts around land and church rage in many Tarascan villages.

While the basic issues of landownership arise out of local conditions, the local groups fighting those issues are connected with national political groups. *Agraristas* (peasants claiming or receiving lands under the agrarian laws emanating from the Revolution) are found in many villages. Lately the Catholic nationalistic movement of the *sinarquistas* has found strong support among the Tarascans. Their different allegiances make for opposition or [609] support of the national and state governments and local agencies, influencing the

1. The terms village and town are used indistinctively throughout this paper to translate the Spanish pueblo.
2 West, 1948, 1.

3:Beals, Carrasco & McCorkle E-5 (1940-1942) 1944
NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

131 In the 16th century, the Tarascans occupied the State of Michoacán and some adjacent parts of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Guerrero. Today they are reduced to part of central Michoacán, including the regions of Lake Pátzcuaro, Zacápu, La Cañada, and the Sierra. The present area extends from Lake Pátzcuaro on the east to near Los Reyes on the West, and from La Cañada south to Uruapan (fig. 1).

114 This study refers solely to the region where Tarascan is still spoken, and, more particularly,

[p. 5a]

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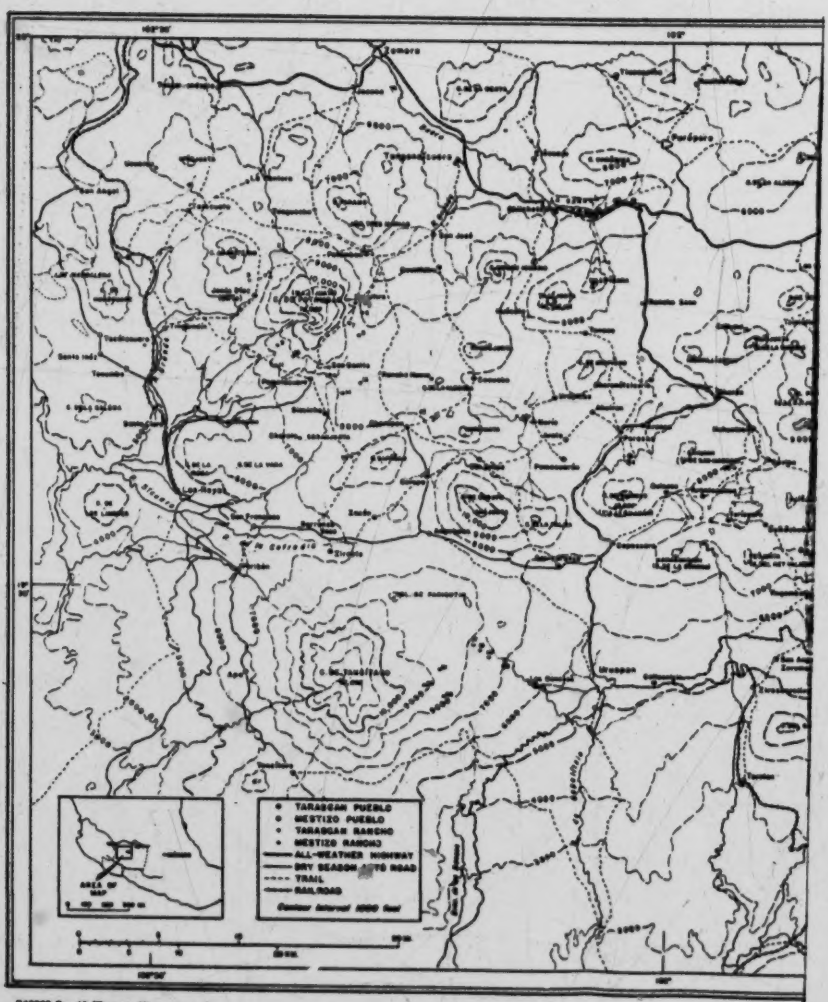

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MAP 1.—Topographic map of the modern Tara

[Facing page 1; section A]

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Topographic map of the modern Tarascan area.

[Facing page 1; section B]

4: West K-5 (1946) 1948 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[P. 1-B]

191 The present territory of Tarascan speech consists of a relatively small area (about 3,500 sq.
131 km.) in northwestern Michoacán. Approximately, the modern area extends eastward from the Zamora-Los Reyes railroad to the east shore of Lake Pátzcuaro, and southward from the México-Guadalajara highway to a line drawn between Pátzcuaro and the peak of Tancítaro (map 1).[1] A few small islands of Tarascan-speaking folk exist south of the main area. Within the present
[161] area nearly 55,000 individuals of indigenous speech live in 66 Tarascan pueblos and 50 ranchos.

131 Four geographical regions comprise the modern
101 Tarascan area. (1) The Sierra (called by the Tarascans Sierra or Siériš) is the largest of the regions, the main portion of which extends westward from Lake Pátzcuaro to slightly east of the Zamora-Los Reyes railroad.[1a] The northern

[1] Map 1 is based on an enlarged portion of sheet 643A (Uruapan) of the
102 AAF Preliminary Base, 1:500,000. This sheet was compiled by the U. S.
131 Aeronautical Chart Service in January 1945 from AAF trimetrogon photo-
133 graphy taken in December 1942. Positions and names of topographic features which appear on the accompanying map were checked on the ground during the spring of 1946. Some errors were encountered on the original map: misnamed localities (e. g. Ajuno), small errors in routes of highways and railroads, mistakes in elevations. Drainage was found to be fairly correct. On map 1 only the more important trails are indicated. Numbered localities refer to the following ranchos:

1. Guarachanillo.	14. San Marcos Arachúcuta.	27. Patambicho.
2. Aranza.	15. Huancho.	28. Ojo de Agua.
3. Las Trojes.	16. Las Cocinas.	29. Ichupio.
4. Las Cañas.	17. San Nicolas.	30. Tarerio.
5. El Venado.	18. La Alberca.	31. Ucasanistacua.
6. Tupan.	19. La Atascada.	32. La Vinata.
7. Tierras Blancas.	20. El Rosario.	33. Las Granadas.
8. La Mesa.	21. El Tepemal.	34. Yunuén.
9. La Tinaja.	22. Tepetata.	35. Tecoena.
10. Queréndaro.	23. Tejamanil.	36. Urandén Morales.
11. Zarzamora.	24. Pacápatiro.	37. Urandén Morelos.
12. San Luis Sorcua.	25. Chupicuaro.	38. Urandén Carian.
13. La Jolla.	26. Oponguio.	39. El Padre.

The following Tarascan ranchos (listed in the official 1940 census) are not located: Tzintzicha (municipio of Chilchota); Agua Escondida (municipio of Tangancícuaro); Las Encinillas and Los Laureles (municipio of Tangamandapio); La Providencia and El Tropezón (municipio of Los Reyes); El Tejocote (municipio of Paracho); Revolución (municipio of Erongarícuaro); and Itzipartimucu (municipio of Tzintzuntzan).

[1a] On modern maps the high area west of Lake Pátzcuaro is termed "Sierra de los Tarascos." In colonial documents the area was usually called "Sierra de Michoacán."

[P. 1C]

131 boundary approximates the México-Guadalajara
101 highway, while the steep escarpment that plunges into the Balsas-Tepalcatepec Basin marks its southern limit. An eastward extension lies south and southeast of the lake and joins with the Sierra de Ozumatlán in eastern Michoacán. Containing
[162] 60 percent of the present indigenous group, the Sierra west of the lake is the modern center of the Tarascans. (2) The Lake Pátzcuaro (Japúndaɹu, Inčámecuaɹu) area contains 19 percent of the
[162] Tarascan population distributed in 13 pueblos and 13 ranchos along the lake shore and on the islands. Formerly one of the political centers of the Tarascan Empire, the lake region, in terms of indigenous speech, has declined rapidly since late colonial times. The speech of the entire south
[191] shore and the towns of Quiroga, Tzintzuntzan, and Erongarícuaro is predominantly Spanish. North and northeast of the Sierra lie two small areas of indigenous speech, which appear to be remnants of the once large northern Tarascan zone. One of these is (3) La Cañada (Erášeman), a small narrow valley located at the northern edge of the Sierra. This valley was the region of the "onze pueblos" of
[162] colonial days. Today nine towns with 9 percent of the total Tarascan population are clustered along a strip of alluvium within the valley. (4) The other remnant of the northern zone lies north and northwest of Lake Pátzcuaro and contains
[162] seven pueblos and 9.5 percent of the total number of Tarascan-speaking folk.[3] Other regions of Tarascan speech consist of "islands" south of the main area. Cuanajo, located southwest of Morelia in the western[1] extension of the Sierra, is the last fragment of the former indigenous area southeast of Lake Pátzcuaro. San Angel Zurumucapio and the newly formed towns (Caltzontzin and Villa Silva) harboring refugees from the stricken

[3] These pueblos include Tirindaro, Tarejaro, and Naranja on the shore of former Zacapu marsh; Azajo and Comanja on the northeastern edge of the Sierra; Taremendo and Zipiajo at the northern foot of Cerro el Zirate.

1 [Probably should read "eastern" & referring to Tarascan Sierra.—Analyst.]

4: West K-5 (1946) 1948 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[P. 2-d]

131 zone around Parícutin Volcano, are the remaining
101 predominantly Tarascan settlements in the *tierra templada*, the upper part of the plateau escarp-
[162] ment (2 percent of Tarascan population in 1940).
[191] Formerly an important part of the Tarascan Empire, the hot lands of the Tepalcatepec and Balsas Basins (*tierra caliente*, Jurío) have lost completely the last vestige of spoken Tarascan.

A small number of Tarascan-speaking folk live in some of the larger mestizo towns adjacent to the main Tarascan area: Uruapan, Pátzcuaro, Coeneo, Zacapu, Zamora. With the possible exception of a few old households in Uruapan, the presence of aboriginal speech in the large mestizo settlements probably represents a recent influx
[166] from rural areas (a desire for urban life, migration from the volcano-devastated areas) rather than linguistic remnants.

THE PHYSIOGRAPHIC AREAS

133 **The Sierra.**—The Tarascan "Sierra" is not a mountain chain; it is rather a volcanic plateau, whose average elevation is some 1,500 feet higher than that of the surrounding areas and whose surface has been roughened by large composite volcanoes, scores of small cinder cones, and extensive lava flows (*malpais*). Lying within Mexico's transcontinental volcanic axis, the Sierra is the locale of the country's newest active volcano, Parícutin.[3] Within the central part of the area elevations range from 6,900 feet to over 12,660 feet (Cerro de Tancítaro). The altitude of the plateau increases from west to east. Elevations of towns in the western half of the Sierra range from 5,180 feet (Atapan) to 7,800 feet (Pamatácuaro); in the eastern half, from 8,040 feet (Sevina) to 8,460 feet (Cumachuén), the highest pueblo in the Sierra west of Lake Pátzcuaro. Even higher settlements (e. g. the rancho of Cruz Gorda, 8,987 feet) exist southeast of the lake, and the highest point in Michoacán, the Cerro de San Andrés (12,840 feet), lies in the Sierra de Ozumatlán, 62 km. east of Morelia.

Tertiary and Quaternary vulcanism has produced the major land forms in the Sierra (map 2). In age the volcanic forms range from probably Eocene to the present time. The oldest are massive composite volcanoes, the highest and most

[3] The chief scientific references on the Parícutin Volcano include Ordóñez (1945), Robles Ramos (1943), Péres Peña (1946), Mexico City Universidad Nacional Instituto de Geología (1945).

4: West K-5 (1946) 1948 NU34 Tarasco NU34
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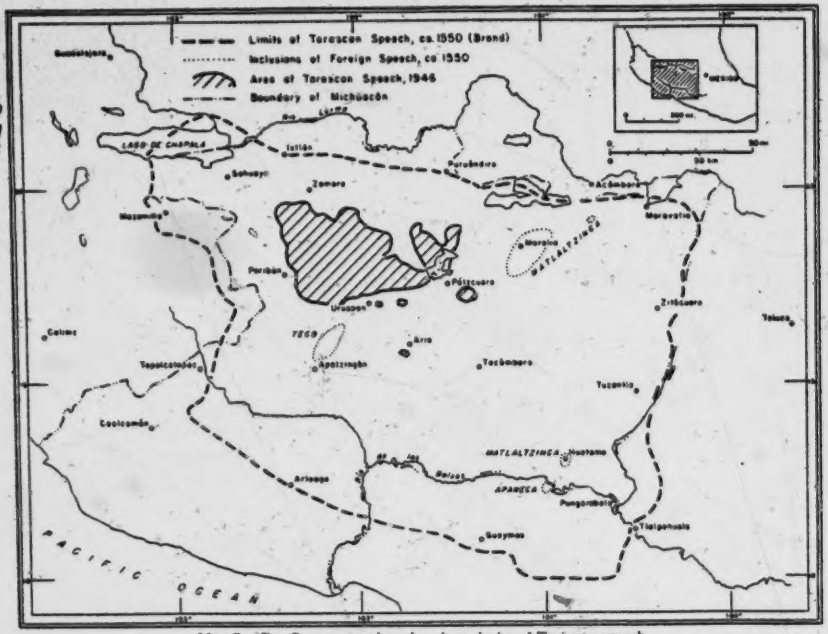

MAP 7.—Pre-Conquest and modern boundaries of Tarascan speech.

5: Beals & Carrasco E-5 (1940-1941) 1944
NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

GAMES OF THE MOUNTAIN TARASCANS[1]

By RALPH L. BEALS *and* PEDRO CARRASCO[2]

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ONE of the major changes in the field of Americanist studies in recent years has been the recognition of an increasing number of parallels between the simpler cultures of South America and those of North America. In a recent article in this journal, Dr. Robert H. Lowie reviewed some of the evidence and summarized the significance of the problems for American culture history.[3] One difficulty in interpreting the parallels now on record has been the absence of intervening cases between northern South America and the United States border. A decade ago the senior author of this paper pointed out evidence of parallels with South America to be found in northern Mexico and ventured to suggest that they represented the peripheral survivals of a culture once found in the Central and South Mexican and Central American areas which had been supplanted by the development of the high cultures.[4] Such a view would be greatly strengthened if survivals of such traits could be found in the intervening region of Middle America.

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One striking parallel between North and South America is the occurrence of games similar to hockey in the Gran Chaco and among the Araucanians.[5] Despite the presence of elaborate ball games of different types in the intervening regions, hockey is strikingly absent. The major importance of the present paper is the recording of a hockey game still existing among the Tarascans in a region of high Middle American culture. As the modern Tarascans are notably deficient in games, associated types are also described, including a form of *quince* or patolli and two European games.

The presence of European games might suggest a post-Conquest introduction of hockey. Variants of the European games, however, are widespread in

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[1] This paper is a contribution of the Program for Anthropological Investigations among the Tarascans, a cooperative program of the University of California and cooperating Mexican institutions. See AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, 42, 1940, pp. 708–711.

[114]
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[2] The data for this paper were collected by Sr. Carrasco in 1940–1941 while working as a student assistant from the Instituto Politécnico Nacional under the direction of the senior author. The senior author's part in this paper consists of field direction, translation and editing, and the writing of the introductory paragraphs. With one exception the games described are all from Angáhuan, a large village in the *municipio* of San Juan Parangarukutíri, about 25 miles west of Uruapan, Michoacán. The village is notably conservative in outlook and customs and the games described are not known in most Tarascan villages.

[3] Robert H. Lowie, *American Culture History* (AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, 42, 1940), pp. 409–428.

[4] Ralph L. Beals. *Comparative Ethnology of Northern Mexico Before 1760* (Ibero-Americana 2, 1932), pp. 151–152.

[5] Erland Nordenskiöld, *Comparative Ethnographic Studies* 9, p. 8; Alfred Métraux, *El Hockey, Deporte de los Indios Chaqueños y de los Araucanos* (La Prensa, Buenos Aires, July 14, 1940, Section 3).

7: Kaplan E-5 (1948)1951 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

their more mundane activities. It was therefore with the expectation of a rewarding experience that the annual Corpus Christi fiesta was awaited in the pueblo of Paracho where the author was engaged in anthropological studies during the summer of 1948.

Paracho is a mestizo community of approximately three thousand persons. It is located in the Sierra Region of Michoacán, in the heart of the Tarascan area. The pueblo is approximately half-way between Carapan and Uruapan on the branch of the national highway that connects those towns and is about fifteen miles from each. Although the community is rapidly becoming urbanized it still adheres to many of the old customs—to a diminishing extent, to be sure, as new ways come to supplant them. The performance of the Huanancha dance at the festival of Corpus Christi is one such "survival," but apparently it is coming to have a function somewhat altered from that which it had in early Colonial days.

The church calendar notwithstanding, the fiesta of Corpus Christi is celebrated at different times in the several pueblos of the Sierra Region of Michoacán. This is primarily because a large and continuous market is a cardinal requirement for a successful holiday, and the travelling salesmen, operators of merry-go-rounds, gamblers, clowns, and other personages who help to make the market place a center of attraction for a wide area, cannot be in several places at the same time. In Paracho, Corpus Christi is celebrated on the second Sunday in August and continues for two days. For the community the holiday has three main functions: commercial, religious and recreational. In 1948, the year in which the fiesta in Paracho was observed by the author, the religious aspect appears to have been subordinate. One villager said that no special church ceremonies were held in Paracho that year because the Bishop of Zamorra and the priest had decided that "it was not good for the people because they don't know how to have a nice holiday and they get drunk." The clerics were also reported to have said, "if the people can have a nice holiday then they can have the church ceremonies (on that day) again." There had been special observances on Corpus Christi in 1947, the first year that the present parish priest was in residence.

But it was not only the religious significance of the holiday that was changing in the minds and activities of the people. Other practices associated with the holiday in the past are also receiving less attention than formerly. For example, each trade group—an organization of members who work at the same specialized trade, of which twenty-one are recognized in Paracho—used to hire a "music" (that is, either a band or an orchestra) which followed the group about the town for the two and a half days of the holiday, playing almost all of the time. Each group would vie with the others to get the best "music" and to have their musicians play the longest and the loudest. In 1948 only five of the trade groups hired either bands or orchestras, and a sixth band was provided by the mayor of the town. We were also told that formerly it was the practice of each trade group to set itself up in the plaza on the second day of the holiday and demonstrate for all to see how they worked—making miniature chocolate

[P. 1]

INTRODUCTION

Prehistoric Tarascans, residing for centuries in the lake country of Michoacán, Mexico, asked questions about things around them. They asked why the land was sometimes flat, sometimes hilly, sometimes rich, and sometimes poor. They wanted to know why the precious waters of a spring suddenly erupted from beneath a tree on the hillside. They felt that the wonderful light-giving sun, the hurrying stream, the glittering stars, and the rustling leaves all required explanation.

Before the Spanish Conquest, the oral accounts of the *Petamuti* (high priest) explained the phenomena of nature through the great deeds of Tarascan gods and culture heroes. Knowledge of historical events was similarly preserved.

Some of these stories, to which Catholic and modern elements have been added, are still "history" to the native Tarascans living in isolated pueblos in the mountains. As with many people, it is what the Tarascans believe to be the historical truth, rather than the actual history itself, which most profoundly influences their thoughts and actions.

BACKGROUND OF THE LEGENDS

The Tarascan area has contracted since the time of the Spanish Conquest. Located approximately 250 miles northwest of Mexico City in the State of Michoacán, it centers in several geographic areas which form a fairly continuous block.

In the area around Zacapu (Fig. 1), traditional point of origin of the Tarascan dynasty, remain a few purely Tarascan villages. Bordering the Mexico City-Guadalajara highway a few miles northwest of Zacapu is a small, pleasant valley approximately a mile wide and six miles long. It is called La Cañada and in it nestle ten of the Once Pueblos of pre-Conquest days.

11: Boyd H-4, 5 (1953) 1958
NU34 Tarasco NU34

ten of the *Once Pueblos* of pre-Conquest days.

South of La Cañada stretches an elevated area of high mountains which cradle wide and fertile valleys. This is the fabled La Sierra country.

East of La Sierra the land falls away to the lower elevation of the lake country which includes the basins of Lake Cuitzeo and Lake Pátzcuaro. The latter, horseshoe in shape with the curve at the west and the two prongs to the east, has its northern and western shores dotted with Tarascan villages. Within the fastness of the lake lie three important Tarascan islands: Janitzio, an astonishingly enormous rock rising high above the blue expanse, with its picturesque fishing village clinging to one side; Jarácuaro, wide and flat, with its village of hat weavers; and La Pacanda, high and flat, with its farms sitting up above the water's edge.

These areas form the solid nucleus of the Tarascan country, whose people, with surprising vigor, resist outside influences threatening to destroy their traditional way of life.

This is a hilly country with conifers on the highest slopes. The lower hills are starred in the summer rainy season with bright red, clear yellow, and delicate violet wildflowers. Michoacán does not become drab even in the dry season, but rather takes on the colors of old tapestries. Its soil is reddish or saffron, its houses dusty white to deep gray, its roofs brownish red, and its lakes azure blue.

Into this area came the ancestors of the Tarascans sometime between the seventh and twelfth centuries of our era. The German scholar Seler (1908, p. 33), in his interpretation of a questionable sixteenth-century codex called the "Lienzo de Jucutacato," argues that they entered the region in the seventh century, but archaeological evidence does not seem to support such an early date. Certainly by the twelfth century they were located in the Lake Pátzcuaro region, in Zacapu, and in La Sierra at Patamban and Tarecuato (Fig. 1).

In olden days the Tarascans were fierce fighters who, over a period of time, forged an empire which successfully repulsed attacks by Aztec armies. It was their hatred of the Aztecs that

[Text Continues on P. 4]

11: Boyd H-4, 5 (1953) 1958
NU34 Tarasco NU34

[P.3]

INTRODUCTION

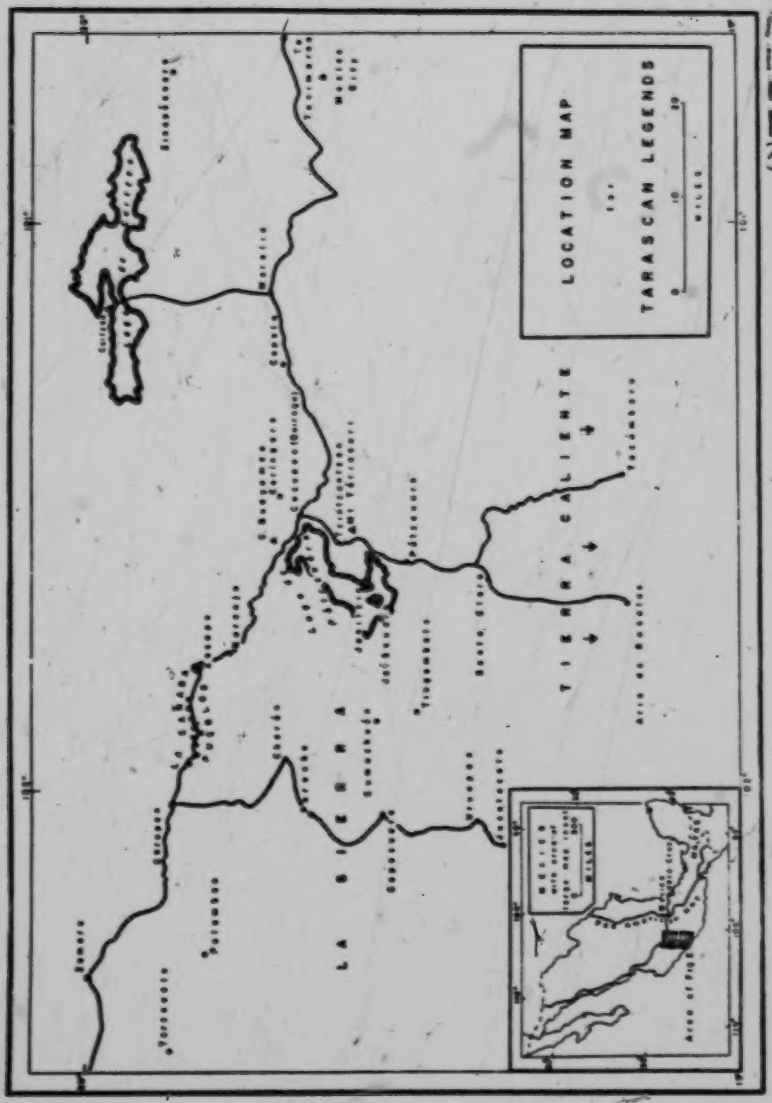

Fig. 1. Map of the Tarascan Area.

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11: Boyd H-4, 5 (1953) 1958
NU34 Tarasco NU34

of the town of Cuitzeo; the other stories were told by Manuel Valenzuela, a former guide around Tzintzuntzan, in his uniquely exciting, urbane style.

Told and retold for generations in their native tongue, these tales were rendered orally in the Spanish of the region and translated into English by the author.

The stories have a continuity dating back to the sixteenth century (Ruiz, 1940). The exact phraseology varies with the individual

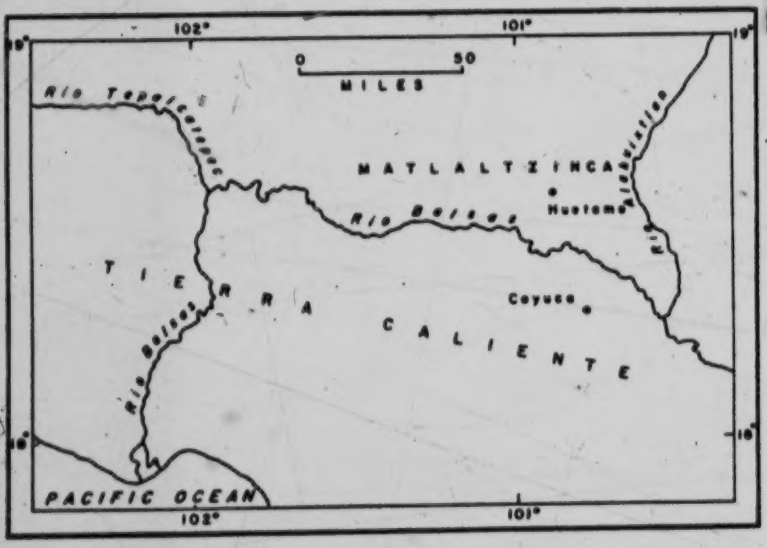

Fig. 2. Map of the Tierra Caliente of Michoacán

narrator, and his rendition usually conforms to the peculiar orientation given by his native pueblo. Some of these legends were published in Spanish by Ruiz in 1940, but this presentation represents their first appearance in English. The Ruiz versions are more elaborate than those presented herein and thereby form an interesting comparison.

11: Boyd H-4, 5 (1953) 1958
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535 her and perform a special dance. The circle, the reverential respect, and the dance are repeated until the participants grow weary.

[796] [103] [131] The Dance of the Viejitos is performed chiefly during the religious fiestas of December, especially in the town of Pátzcuaro, a short distance from the old imperial village of Tzintzuntzan (Fig. 1).

JUST AS THE BIRDS

Historical Comment

175 642 131 With their capital at Tzintzuntzan (Place of the Hummingbird), the vast Tarascan empire extended beyond the boundaries of the modern state of Michoacán and, next to the Aztec empire, was the largest political unit in Mexico. In spite of several accounts by early Spanish friars (Basalenque, 1886; Beaumont, 1932; Escobar, 1924; Mendieta, 1870; Rea, 1882), perhaps less is known about the origin and historical antecedents of the Tarascans than of any other major Mexican group.

17 [197] Traditional Mexican hypotheses derive them from the northwest, suggesting close affinity to Nahuatl peoples. Philologically, this theory does not hold up; the Tarascan language has no family connection with other Mexican idioms and must be classified as an independent, isolated family (Mason, 1940). Recent archaeological work (Brand, 1944, Goggin, 1943, p. 57; Osborne, 1943) indicates a more southeasterly origin, possibly from the Mixteca of Oaxaca and Guerrero either down the east arm of the Balsas River valley or along the Pacific Coast and thence northward up the Balsas, Tepalcatepec, and Marqués rivers into central Michoacán (Fig. 2).

173 829 [814] The Tarascans have never indulged in scholarly hypotheses. For them the answer to their early origins and travels unfolds in the legend of the birds. This legend supports the theory of a southern origin.

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THE LEGEND OF LAKE CUITZEO

Historical Comment

539 On the main highway leading northwest from Mexico City to
131 Guadalajara, an arterial road leads off to the north at Morelia and
103 passes by Lake Cuitzeo and the pueblo of the same name (Fig. 1).
133 Like all Mexican lakes, Cuitzeo is annually shrinking in size.
823 Nevertheless, the inhabitants of the tiny pueblo will gladly tell you the story of their once-proud lake which formerly resembled a heart.

539 This story belongs to a period of instability and planned war-
175 fare between the late twelfth and early fourteenth centuries. Spies
648 were sent into the lands of the snake-Chichimecs, located east of
721 Lake Pátzcuaro at Curínguaro, to learn the paths, river crossings,
726 and other data essential to a successful compaign. Warriors went to battle with wreaths of flowers and plumes of eagle feathers on their heads. The lord in command would set out with a war party made up of columns of warriors. This traditional method of journeying to battle appears in the Cuitzeo legend.

The Legend

539 Under the protective rays of the Southern Cross, those divine
823 guiding stars, Cueróhperi created a garden. The goddess created crystalline rivers in the countryside of Guayangareo and placed the faithful Mount Manuma as the guardian over the region.

In this garden the princess Hapunda lived as a recluse by order of her father. Each morning Father Huriata's first rays of light gently awakened her with a kiss on the forehead. She was so lovely that her subjects called her "Tzinziquin." Always sad and melancholy, her tears flowed as profusely as the waters of the springs forming the rushing river which fell over the nearby cliffs and crashed against the rocks blocking the pathway into the lower valley. The relentless waters penetrated the rock, but the tears of Hapunda did not move the hearts of the gods, and she vainly

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poor have only pain and sorrow. The poor is our brother; the rich is our master. Love the poor; he is of our race. The rich is the foreigner; he pays us with sarcasm and jokes. Remember always that he who suffers and cries needs your help. These are the maxims of love.

THE LEGEND OF TACAMBA

Historical Comment

All the drainage of southwestern Michoacán is southward to the Balsas river, the heart of the tropical region. This area was in pre-Spanish times seemingly under Tarascan domain (Osborne, 1943). Coyucán, mentioned in the legend of Tacamba as being one of the seats of Tarascan power at the beginning of the sixteenth century, is probably the town of Coyuca, a scant thirty-five miles south of present Huetamo (Fig. 2). At the time of the Conquest it was still an area of dispute between the Tarascans and the Aztecs, although both sides were temporarily at peace.

The wars between the Tarascans and Aztecs over this area accounted in large part for the refusal of Siguangua and Tzimtzicha to lend Tarascan support to the Aztecs against the Spaniards, thereby enabling the conquistadores to defeat both empires separately.

Tacamba, like Camachuén of the preceding legend, was one of the vassal princes of the Tarascan empire under King Siguanga and Tzimtzicha, his successor, at the time of the coming of the Spaniards. The death of Siguangua is accurately preserved in the body of the legend. In the first year of the Spanish arrival on the borders of Michoacán, smallpox and dysentery brought by Spanish messengers struck the Tarascan capital killing the king and his chief priests. The epidemic continued to take a terrible toll among the native population, weakening the Tarascans for the Spanish Conquest.

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The dream portion in the same legend reveals the nature of the Tarascan people's subsequent acceptance of the Conquest through the successful teachings of the Catholic church.

As literature, the legends are presented in language which seems remarkably artistic and urbane for the Tarascan's menial status and lack of education in modern Mexico. However, it should be remembered that from the beginning these stories had a direct religious association and the Petamuti undoubtedly demanded rather exact adherence to theoretical norms of oral literature by the neophyte who would succeed him as the bearer and guardian of folk tradition. The conditions of their annual telling at the fiesta of *Uazcata cónscuaro* to the assembled tribe encouraged the priest to develop them into emotional, oral literature. Some of this pre-Conquest tendency has continued to the present time. Also, these legends have probably become embellished with illusions and atmospheric details by skilled narrators in historic times. This author-translator chose the most sophisticated and excitingly literary rendition available where a choice presented itself.

One of the most impressive facts about these legends, even to the non-analytical person, is the presentation of a "mood" and the changes in mood as the given story progresses. The narrator seems to live and to feel the story.

For some of these legends to have been preserved so well since the Spanish Conquest may reflect, to some extent, the relative isolation of Michoacán, but it seems more likely to indicate the importance these legends have had and still have in Tarascan life. In the present Tarascan area, nearly four hundred and fifty years of acculturation have obscured many traits of native provenience. Today's economic specialization and trade patterns are apparently based upon aboriginal conditions (West, 1948, p. 57), yet they are known to have been formalized by Europeans (Beals, 1946, p. 210). Nevertheless, the character of such things as marriage, family life, and the people's attitudes toward life's values—the real educative forces affecting the thinking and personality of Tarascans—appear to be relatively unchanged.

Despite the more recent modifications in material culture and social organization, the basic values woven into the early legends